

Salvation Army Harbor Light Center
1515 W. Monroe
Chicago, IL 60607
Captain Nancy Powers, Director

Statement to the Human Services Commission 9/8/2011

The cuts in the state's social services budget hurt those citizens who have the least. Instead of providing services to assist people to obtain work, housing, treatment for addictions and mental health services, these are the services that are and have been repeatedly cut.

Cuts in addictions services have caused treatment facilities, like the Salvation Army Harbor Light program, to serve fewer clients with fewer staff. As a result, people have to wait longer to get into treatment, and programs have to limit their services based on the available staff. The clients we serve at the Salvation Army Harbor Light do not have many options if they want to get treatment for alcoholism or substance abuse. Our clients are homeless (often due to a mental illness), or may be ex-offenders. They are unemployed, so they do not have insurance to allow them to go to private or hospital-based programs.

The state of Illinois cut our substance abuse treatment funding for the next fiscal year by almost \$150,000. This has resulted in our needing to cut staff, but the demand for services continues to increase.

We know that many in our homeless population struggle with alcoholism and substance abuse. Our Mobile Outreach Program has referred almost 900 individuals to alcohol, drug treatment and mental health services in the past two years. Our Mobile Outreach program goes into the communities to provide food and services to the homeless. However, when we are able to get someone off the street, many of the social services needed to re-build a life are no longer available or are overburdened due to state budget cuts.

The State of Illinois's continuing cuts in substance abuse treatment funds is unfair and fiscally irresponsible. It is well known that when fewer people can get the treatment they need, there is a rise in domestic violence, DUI's, and other crimes related to alcohol or drug abuse. With over 75% of the state's prison population being incarcerated for alcohol or substance related crimes, isn't it time for the state to examine how it could better spend its funds providing, rather than cutting, social services to assist people with addictions instead of expanding the far more costly prison system..